(e) Government of Afghanistan considers capacity building as a foremost priority for the reconstruction of the country and has welcomed India's assistance in this regard. As part of rebuilding Afghanistan's institutional capacity, training for teachers, diplomats, journalists, judicial officials, women entrepreneurs, fligh engineers, doctors, paramedics, police officers and officials of Ministry of Light Industry and Geodesy and Cartography Department were conducted at various institutions in India.

Revalidation of Diplomate Passports

1735. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether issue/revalidation of Official/Diplomatic Passport and Visa Note to Secretaries to Government of India from Ministry of Science and Technology has been done after they obtained political clearance and clearance of Screening Committee of Secretaries or Prime Minister.

(b) if so, the details thereof including countries visited, countries transited and purpose and duration of visit for the last three years, year-wise and category-wise;

(c) if so, whether above visits were private or official; and

(d) if not, the details of issue/revalidation of Official/Diplomatic Passport and Visa Note to above Secretries without approval of Screening Committee of Secretaries or Prime Minister for the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

India's stand after Tsunami

1736. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps being taken by Government in the aftermath of the Tsunami disaster in the South Asian region to establish its position as a benefactor in the region and to prevent outside powers to get foothold in India's backyard;

(b) the expenditure involved; and

(c) the powers involved in the process and the nature and extent of the aid given by each outside power to each Tsunami affected country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) In respect of Sri Lanka, a massive relief effort was launched in which India deployed an air detachment of 10 aircraft for three weeks and sent about 15 naval ship-loads of supplies, fifteen medical teams a mobile field hospital (140 men) that was airlifted, specialist doctors, a 45-bed hospital ship (INS Jamuna), 10 teams of naval divers and a 81-member composite Army disaster management team. Indian ships and aircraft were the first to arrive in Sri Lanka. This contingent provided immediate emergency assistance; re-commissioned Galle harbour; provided emergency medical services to tens of thousands of Sri Lankans; and in the initial confusion among administrative authorities functioned as temporary command centres. Ten truckloads of supplies sent by CII were handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission at Point Pedro in Northern Sri Lanka for distribution among affected people in that area.

Subsequently, the Sri Lankan Government has commenced the "Rebuilding the Nation Programme." In response to Sri Lankan requests in this regard, RITES has conducted a preliminary technical assessment of damaged railway links and a team from the Ministry of Health visited Sri Lanka on Feb. 23—28 for assessing Sri Lankan requirements in the health sector The Government of India earlier dispatched 5 Bailey Bridges to Sri Lanka which have been put to use in restoring crucial road links. Tamil speaking psychiatrists have also been deployed to help survivors overcome emotional trauma and a consignment of homeoepathic medicines has been supplied.

In respect of Maldives, India deployed an air detachment of 4 aircraft and 2 ships at a time for about three weeks. These assets were used for search and rescue, damage assessment and transport of supplies and communication with remote atolls. Naval personnel went ashore and helped provide essential services, assisted in sanitation operations and provided medical relief. They also repaired communication facilities. They also played a crucial role in coordination and controlling relief efforts in the early stages.

(b) Prime Minister has said that Rs. 100 crore will be made available for relief to Sri Lanka and Rs. 5 crore for relief to Maldives.

(c) TheTsunami disaster in Sri Lanka and other Indian Ocean rim countries attracted a very high degree of international attention and evoked an enormous outpouring of compassion and international assistance to the affected countries, including Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Exact details of the assistance to Sri Lanka are not readily available as assistance was channeled through a number of sources including UN agencies and NGOs. However, as per available information, it is known that the United States deployed about 700-800 US Marines on the island of Sri Lanka for relief operations; Pakistan deployed two ships, three aircraft, 50 marines a field hospital, 180 man army engineering team, and a shipload of earthmoving and transport equipment; Bangladesh deployed one ship, a diving team and two aircraft; UK deployed two ships and helicopters; Russia deployed aircraft; and disaster management teams were deployed by Canada and France. In addition to the above, it is known that Canada, Germany, UK, China and multilateral agencies have announced a number of financial measures such as debt-relief for Sri Lanka. A number of countries have also made financial donations and pledges to assist in the reconstruction of Sri Lanka.

Precise details of assistance to Maldives are not readily available as assistance was routed through a number of channels including UN agencies and NGOs. As per available information two Pakistani ships that were already in Male when the Tsunami struck were deployed on emergency relief operation; Bangladesh deployed a patrol vessel and a helicopter; and France deployed a naval vessel. A number of countries have made financial donations and pledges to assist in the reconstruction of the Maldives.

Setback due to postponement of SAARC summit

1737. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the SAARC relations had a setback due to the postponement of Dhaka meet 2005; and

(b) if not, whether the Indian diplomacy has been utilized to strengthen the unity among the people to people relationship of Nepal and Bangladesh with India?